

OPEN LETTER FROM DR. CHESTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN STANDARD.

Dear Brother:-

Your issue of the Presbyterian Standard for April 11th contains an editorial entitled, "Crying Peace, when there is no Peace." In this editorial you divide the Church of today into two bands, one of which is "temporizing with evil lest it become worse, while the other is fighting it on all occasions." You speak of the "foundations being destroyed and the devil, by means of rationalism, undermining the Church and destroying the faith of men." You also state that "there is a conviction on the part of our people that our leaders are disposed to temporize with this evil for the sake of peace, with the result that the deficit of one branch of our work is steadily growing in indebtedness."

In another paragraph of your editorial referring to the National Christian Council you state that "our missionaries who are really sound in their faith and against whom, with one exception, no charges have ever been brought, are disposed to make light of any danger that may arise by entering a Council composed of men holding almost every form of unbelief." In your issue of April 4th referring to the same matter, after speaking of rationalism creeping into the churches and Seminaries teaching heresy and denying the divinity of Christ, you say that "when we see our missionaries for the sake of a doubtful advantage willing to have fellowship with the same school of doubt we feel aggrieved."

While you have been considerate enough to refrain from calling names in these statements, no one who reads them will have any difficulty in knowing to whom and to what you refer. The branch of our work referred to is our foreign work. By "our leaders" it is perfectly evident that you refer to those in charge of that work, its Executive Committee and Secretaries. The missionaries referred to are those members of our two China Missions who have expressed themselves as in favor of our being represented in the National Christian Council.

I wish now to ask you to produce some proof of your statement that those in charge of our foreign missionary work, to whom you refer as "our leaders", have been temporizing with the kind of evils referred to in these quotations. In what letter of an official character, or newspaper article, or deliverance of any kind of the Committee of Foreign Missions or one of its Secretaries have you seen any statement that would justify your charge?

Sometime ago one of our China missionaries published an article in your paper accusing the Executive Committee and two of the Secretaries of obstructing the publication of an orthodox Cyclopaedia in China, and of holding friendly relations with the old China Continuation Committee whose soundness in the faith he impeached, and various other things. In a very brief reply I called attention to the mistakes and inaccuracies of his statements in that article. In my correspondence with you, as you will remember, I raised the question of the advisability of publishing articles of that kind reflecting on "our leaders", and containing statements of whose erroneous and misleading character I sent you proof. Presumably this is what you refer to when you say in the third paragraph of your editorial, "we have been warned that the agitation of such questions will re-act upon our benevolences and that we should keep



ment". The natural interpretation of that statement would be that you had been warned against combatting the heresies referred to, such as Rationalism and the denial of the divinity and the resurrection of Christ, but I respectfully suggest that that is a very different matter from the publication of such articles as the one I was writing to you about, making unwarranted attacks and raising unfounded suspicions, and thus crippling the efficiency of those charged by our Church with the responsibility of conducting its benevolent agencies.

Again I should like to know on what evidence you base your statement that the National Christian Council in China "is composed of men holding almost every form of unbelief," and that our missionaries are disposed to make light of any danger that may arise by entering such a Council. I have been trying very earnestly to ascertain exactly how it is composed with reference to the doctrinal status of its membership, but have as yet been able to obtain very imperfect information on the subject. I have seen statements and counter-statements both in private letters and in the public press. Careful committees of our Missions in China are investigating this matter for us. If, when their reports are received, it should be found that the Council is "composed of men holding almost every form of unbelief," there is not the slightest danger that either one of our China Missions or any individual member of those Missions, will wish to be represented in it, or that the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions would for a moment consent to their being represented in it, or that our General Assembly would approve of such consent if it were given by the Committee. What we know at present is that the Council is composed of representatives in about even numbers of all the great Missions operating in China and of the organized Native Church of China in its different branches. Our Missions are excluded because they have not yet consented to be represented. The China Inland Mission, the largest and, perhaps, the most conservative in matters of doctrine and criticism of all the China Missions, has a number of members in the Council. The Northern Presbyterian Missions have a number of representatives, among whom is the universally beloved and trusted Dr. Walter Lowrie, Secretary of the Bible Union. The leaders of the Native Church in China were largely trained by the older missionaries before there was any such development of Modernism as has recently occurred, and for that reason, as I have frequently heard it said by our missionaries, are probably more conservative as a body than a good many missionaries of the present day. It is to be hoped that the representatives of the Native Church in the Council will reflect this attitude of the Church if the statement referred to is correct. Our hope is that when we get full information it will be found that those members of the Council representing the orthodox conservative view will be found to be largely in the majority and will be able to control its policy and work. This, of course, is something to be desired, whether our Missions are ever represented in it or not.

One thing that inspires us with this hope is the recently received report of the investigating committee of the North Kiangsu Mission on conditions in Nanking Theological Seminary, a union institution in the control of which the Missions of the Presbyterian Churches North and South, the Methodist Churches North and South and the Christian Church are cooperating. This report shows that after a very searching investigation in a faculty of four foreigners and four natives now on the field one foreigner was found to be unsatisfactory to the extent that, while he expressed an unqualified belief in the Virgin Birth and the Deity and vicarious atonement of Christ and the necessity of regeneration, he held a moderately liberal



view of the doctrine of inspiration, and expressed a doubt as to the personality of Satan and a hope of the final restoration of the lost. One of the native teachers was also found to be unsatisfactory mainly on his views of Biblical criticism.

As an indication of the extent to which our missionaries are disposed to make light of the dangers of unsound teaching of any kind, we are informed that the representatives of both China Missions charged with this investigation expect to request the Board of Managers of the Seminary to make a change in this situation at its forth-coming meeting in the month of June.

We have a situation in the Home Church parallel to this one in China in our relation with the Federal Council and the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance. The majorities in our General Assemblies who have year after year voted for the continuance of our connection with those bodies, notwithstanding the fact that the ministers of the churches represented in them are known to have a certain proportion of men holding more liberal views of doctrine and criticism than those held by ministers of our Church as a body, have not been accused of making light of the dangers of heresy and unbelief in the casting of their votes. Their point of view has been that they could fight for the truth inside of the Federal Council and the Alliance more effectively than they could on the outside, and could control their action, as has over and over again been done, in the interest of evangelical truth and the spiritual mission of the Church.

In conclusion I call your attention to the report to our General Assembly on the subject of orthodoxy and our relations with the National Christian Council, which I have already sent you for publication, which shows beyond question, it seems to me, that the Committee of Foreign Missions has been making diligent effort, in obedience to the orders of the General Assembly, first to ascertain the facts about the existence of alleged evils affecting the work in all our fields, and then to have those evils when found corrected in a regular and authoritative way by the official bodies representing us on the foreign field. And I challenge your right as the responsible Editor of one of our Church organs to characterize this course and policy of the Committee as indicating a disposition to "temporize with evil for the sake of peace."

Fraternally yours,

SHC-R.